COMMUNITY THRIFT STORE

The Community Thrift Store, at 625 Valencia St. in S.F. (near 17th), is an enterprise that serves numerous organizations, projects and charities. If you find yourself with clutter that you'd be grateful to get out of your closets (it's almost spring cleaning time!), you can do that and help the Bisexual Center. Donate your old clothes, etc. to the store, giving them the Bi Center's number (#146) when you bring them in. They will then be tagged with that number, and the Bi Center will get a percentage of the proceeds from the sale of those articles. (It's certainly easier than holding a garage sale!) Remember, the store needs to know the number of the Center to credit us when those goods are sold.

BOARD MEETINGS

The next two meetings of the Bi Center Board of Directors will be Monday, March 11th and Monday, April 8th, at 7:30 p.m. March's meeting will be at Maggi Rubenstein's home; Autumn Courtney will be hosting April's meeting. All members are welcome. Anyone interested in joining the Board is urged to attend a few meetings and learn about what we do.

S.F.S.I. TRAINING

There will be another San Francisco Sex Information training beginning in late April. S.F.S.I. is an organization that runs a switchboard offering free information on sexuality to anyone that phones in. The switchboard is staffed by volunteers who have gone through a 50-hour training like the one being offered. It is a fabulous opportunity to get an extensive basic education in sexuality, to explore and grow personally, and to meet some very special people. The course will run April 20th and 21st, and May 1st, 4th, 5th, 15th, 18th, and 19th. It costs $150 and a 6 month commitment to working at the Switchboard for 3 hours a week. For more information, phone 665-7300.

BI CENTER PHONE FIASCO

Apologies to those who have tried to reach us at 431-4431 without success. The answering machine's trouble has been diagnosed and will hopefully be working soon.

an editorial

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION!

Many of you read through the newsletter and don't consider the fact that someone has to write the material in here, edit it, type it, and lay it out for printing. For the last two issues, I have heard rumors circulating that there isn't going to be another newsletter, or people asking me if there will be one coming out. I'm trying to keep the newsletter going, and have every intention of it continuing. I would much prefer people asking me WHAT THEY COULD HELP OUT WITH or WHAT THEY MIGHT CONTRIBUTE, rather than simply asking if there will be another Bi-Monthly. Artwork (that can be xeroxed) and your points of view on things are needed. I am happy to report that for the first time since I took over this job, I already have some material for the next issue. That makes it much easier, rather than being a one-person last minute scramble to fill out the newsletter. As I am trying to finish my dissertation these months as well as working two part-time jobs to support myself and volunteering as a therapist at U.C. Berkeley. This is one extra burden that could be made easier by people taking a little time to sit down to write their thoughts on issues appropriate to this newsletter. I would like the newsletter provide a forum for a sharing of personal experiences, now that we no longer have the Bi Center rap groups. The series beginning about various members' coming-out experiences can work if you send in your stories. Send things to either the Bi Center, or to my address, 1907 Haste St. #3D, Berkeley 94704.

---Jay Paul, Editor

PACIFIC CENTER RAP GROUPS

A group for bisexual men and women is held every Sunday night from 7 to 9 p.m. at The Pacific Center (2712 Telegraph Ave. in Berkeley). Participants routinely go out for coffee together afterwards. For more information, call Nate Brown at 235-7179, or call 482-2819.

The third Monday of every month, a Bisexual Outreach meeting is held at The Pacific Center at 6 p.m. to plan bisexual programming. All are welcome.

A bi women's group meets every Wednesday night at The Pacific Center. Call 841-5224 for more details.

about aids

by Maggi Rubenstein

These are demanding times. Times in which we're facing a tremendous crisis, the enormity of which is currently incalculable. Perhaps we are going through the most serious times in our lives.

As a bi woman, I am active in the Committee to Preserve Our Sexual and Civil Liberties, Mobilization Against AIDS, the Women and AIDS Network, and the Sexologists' Sexual Health Project. I have been speaking out about AIDS, decrying those current homophobic and biphobic political voices that rule our lifestyles bad rather than the virus.

We have been told that the places where some of us meet and play, such as bathhouses, are evil and should be closed. In other cities and states--and in Washington D.C.--quarantine and internment have been discussed. Some of those in power, who shape public policy and disease control programs in the fight against AIDS come to this arena with serious prejudices and destructive notions. James Mason, the head of the Centers for Disease Control, is a Mormon who has used aversive shock therapy to "change" gay and bisexual men into heterosexuals (an anti-sex procedure that tends to leave men asexual and fearful). Meanwhile, the Federal, state, and local governments release far too little money to adequately combat this epidemic, and deny us effective education programs.

The anti-sex forces today in this country would deny us our civil rights. We are urged to take a blood test that is faulty, whose accuracy is unknown, and with ambiguous meaning. Yet this creates a potential for abuses in how the information of who tests positive for the AIDS antibody is used.

We are living in very scary times and many of us as bisexual persons may not be out about who we are. Fears have led many to return to the closet. Ours is a younger movement and there are fewer of us who are politically active. Gay and bisexual men are listed in disease statistics constantly, but that kind of acknowledgment is neither enough nor the kind we are looking for. We must speak out for our rights as bisexuals every day. Please join me in CPSCL and MAA in our political work. If you are not able to work politically, please get informed on the issues and educate your friends. Now as never before, we must have unity with all oppressed sexual minorities as we go through a terrifying period of repression. Reach out to each other with love; we all need each other!

(This is a regular column that will appear in each issue of The Bi-Monthly. Your questions and letters are welcomed and will be answered by Maggi as space permits.)

SAFE-SEX GUIDELINES

The safe-sex guidelines listed below are based upon a recent update of those listed before, which focused only on homosexual activity. The key thing to recognize is that they are based upon research which has found the AIDS-related virus in all body fluids of some people. Therefore, in choosing how to be sexual, remember the guidelines listed below, and consider that an increase in the amount of bodily fluid taken internally or in the number of one's sexual partners increases the risk.

Safe-sex practices: Massage, hugging, mutual masturbation (penile, vaginal, clitoral), social kissing (dry), body-to-body rubbing, S & M activities (without bruising or bleeding), using one's own sex toys.

Possibly safe sex practices: French kissing (wet), oral-vaginal contact (cunnilingus), sucking without climax (fellatio interruptus), vaginal intercourse with condom, anal intercouse with condom, watersports (urine contact, external only).

Unsafe sex practices: Vaginal intercourse without condom, oral-anal contact (rimming), manual-anal intercourse (fisting), blood contact, sharing sex toys, semen or urine in the mouth, anal intercourse without condom.

For further info, call the S.F. AIDS Foundation at 863-AIDS in San Francisco, or 800-FOR-AIDS in Northern California.

coming out!

INTRODUCTION

Our society is so sexually repressive that we often feel that our sexuality is not only wrong or bad, but that we are the only ones who feel the way we do. One of The Bisexual Center's goals is to spread the awareness that bisexuality is a normal and valid lifestyle in which many people participate in a variety of ways.

One of the best ways to communicate this is to share our personal experiences. In our rap groups, we found how sharing our coming out stories helped to support and validate a positive sense of identity. I'd like to see that sharing continued. In each Bi-Monthly, we will try to feature a coming out story. If you would like to share your story, please write to Jay Paul c/o The Bisexual Center. On this topic or any other that you would like write up, feel free to be as personal or as anonymous as you wish.

I. COMING OUT: Autumn Courtney

I grew up in an all-white, upper-middle class suburb in the East Bay. This story details a series of movements in my life, not the least of which involved a geographical move to San Francisco.

I'm aware of having been attracted to both men and women for as long as I can recall. When I played exploratory sex games with peers as a child, it was with both boys and girls. The advent of adolescence ended such free play. Suddenly I found myself shy and inhibited about my body and didn't want to let anyone see me.

At age 14, I rebelled against my liberal, well-educated parents (and upbringing) by becoming fanatically religious. I was so involved with religion that I rarely socialized outside church or school. But if I was a "Jesus freak," I was a Jesus freak who loved rock n'roll. No matter what I was warned by religious leaders, I never stopped listening. One of my favorite performers was David Bowie, whom I idolized. Word was that he was bisexual, but I couldn't connect that to my own secret feelings. After all, bisexuals were obviously artists, free spirits, and flamboyant eccentrics. What had all that to do with me? It seemed clear that the average person could never indulge in such a sexual lifestyle.

In the meantime, I was moving from the phase of reading about sex to being sexual. At 17 I fell madly in love with a boy my age, and quickly decided that I wanted to go to bed with him. I felt fairly well informed from my readings, and made a very conscious decision to "go all the way." I felt good about being able to choose the time and the place, and I felt as if my needs were taken care of.

I had opened the door to sexual experience, and quickly found that things were not as clearcut as in the books. Suddenly I was made aware of unwritten rules about being sexual. If I wanted to keep the acceptance of my friends, sex was o.k. only if you were "going steady," if it was not too frequent (girls were never supposed to want sex more than boys!!), and if it was not too kinky. And no one night stands, please!

My relationship with C.T. didn't last very long, but it was soon followed by one with another boy, G.C., which proved to be far more supportive of my growing sexuality. G. was often mistaken for a woman, as he had very long blond hair and dressed in an androgynous fashion. I found that that really turned me on, and made a first stab at looking at my long-suppressed homosexual feelings. Plus we often discussed David Bowie's bisexuality. At this point I felt o.k. about other people being bi or gay, but could not accept it in myself. While I loved looking at photos of nude women with G. on a regular basis, I felt very nervous about the idea of lesbianism.

At the same time, through school and work, I started meeting people who identified as gay. Some gay men were soon very good friends, and I started hanging out in San Francisco. After almost 5 years with G.C., I recognized that I needed a change, and left behind that relationship and suburbia by moving to San Francisco. That month, in 1980, I went to my first Lesbian/

Gay Freedom Day Parade. It was an emotional experience; I found myself crying because I wanted to belong, yet didn't know what to do.

So much had been changing so rapidly that I couldn't deal with it very well. I shut down my feelings once again. That October, I read an article by Fred Klein in Forum magazine on sexuality. It gave a number of rating scales based on the Kinsey scale of 0-6, which described the continuum of heterosexuality and homosexuality in people. The reader was invited to rate her or himself on their sexual feelings, their feelings of emotional attraction to both sexes, and several other relational variables. To my horror, I came out as a "bisexual"! I was so upset that I hid the magazine under my mattress so that my roommates wouldn't see it. I didn't know what to do about it. The relationships that I had at that point were from the male gay community.

Then I met A.S., who looked like a woman, but had male genitals. It was two weeks into the relationship that he said to me "At first I thought you were attracted to me because I was really different. And now I can see that you're attracted to me because what you really want is a woman." That scared the shit out of me, but I let A. introduce me to some lesbians whom he knew. I couldn't identify with them. They lived up to my fears about lesbians by fitting into my stereotyped image of a "diesel dyke." I argued with myself (there's a lot of internal debating that goes on in this process) that I could not be lesbian because I was not like the ones that I saw. The next month, March of 1981, I first heard about the Bi Center.

I must confess that my initial encounter with the Bi Center was a bust. I went to a few rap groups and then dropped out. It was very difficult for me to be in the groups. They were mostly composed of men, and everybody there seemed to be talking so freely about their bisexuality. I hadn't even had an experience with a woman at that point! I was absolutely petrified with fear.

But things were moving along in other ways. Soon afterwards, I was introduced by a friend to a woman who was new to the city and looking for people to meet. I went out for coffee with T.N., and we both found ourselves instantly attracted to one another. From coffee we went on to hang out for the rest of the day.

With the help of a little wine to bolster my courage, I started the ball rolling, and we were soon in bed together. I can remember so strongly just how much relief I felt at finally being sexual with a woman. It felt so completely natural! As a result of that, I went to a lesbian coming-out group in May. But I soon felt the odd person out, and left the group because there was no opportunity in the group to acknowledge and deal with my feelings for men.

T.N. moved in in June, and we marched together in the Parade. Much had happened between my first Parade and this! Soon another lesbian couple moved in where we were living. That summer I lived in a completely lesbian household, where no men were allowed in the house and we simply did not associate with men. I was really uncomfortable with all that. Twice I actually snuck out of the house to have a date with a man. I had to keep such behavior quiet. After several months, it became clear that this was not going to work for me. I moved out at the end of September and I broke up with T.

I dated several women, but then got back together with A.S. That was painful, as I lost several lesbian friends just over that. Once we started living together again, I realized that I had to go back and try my luck once more at the Bisexual Center.

I started going to the Monday night women's rap group, and became quite involved in it. I finally began to deal with all my feelings, my relationships, and just the day-to-day reality for me of being bisexual. That was three years ago. I can see that I've moved quite a lot. Of course, I periodically have a minor crisis about my bisexuality and what that means in the larger scheme of things, but those pass. I have become extremely political and up-front about my sexuality. Both in politics and other areas of my life, I find myself living very close to the gay/lesbian community. And I'm still growing!

events

GAMES NIGHT

Phil Bradley will be hosting another games night at 779 Frederick St. (off Arguello) in San Francisco on Saturday, March 16th. Bring cards, your favorite board games, munchies and drinks for a friendly evening of socializing--and cut-throat competition! We'll be starting at about 7:30 p.m. A $2 donation is requested. For further information, call Phil or Tom at 681-7563.

BETSY ROSE IN PERFORMANCE

Singer/songwriter/activist Betsy Rose will be at Valencia Rose Friday 3/15, and at La Pena Cultural Center on Sunday the 17th at 8 p.m. Admission is $6-8, on a sliding scale. The performance Sunday will be sign language interpreted.

Betsy Rose has long enjoyed a national reputation as an artist whose songs and performances consistently reach to the heart, offering inspiration, healing and challenge. Betsy's latest album release, "Live From the Very Front Row" includes 2 Bi-positive songs. Let's support this bisexual performer. See you there!

For reservations at Valencia Rose (at 766 Valencia St., S.F.) phone 863-3863. La Pena (at 3105 Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley) does not take reservations.

HOUSE-WARMING PARTY!

Judy and Barbara invite all of their friends from the Bisexual Center to help them celebrate their new home at 1201-14th Avenue #302 (off of Lincoln, near Golden Gate Park). The party will begin at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 6th. Please bring appropriate potables and comestibles for a gala house-warming! (This is not an official Bi Center party, but any donations will be appreciated.) For more info, call Phil or Tom at 681-7563.

IN THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY...

It's time to party! Join us on Saturday, May 4th, at 1201-14th Avenue #302, where Barbara and Judy will be hosting a Bi Center party. We don't have a May pole (alas!) but can promise warmth, good company and good cheer after 8 p.m. Please bring food and drink. $2 donation.

Maggi

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ADVERTISEMENTS

Advertising space in The Bi-Monthly is now available to members at $1.00 per 42-letter line, or $5.00 per business card. Sorry, no "personals"—but you can advertise if trying to form a bi group for a particular interest or activity.

BISEXUAL CENTER T-SHIRTS--BY MAIL!

Order yours now! Just $12 each, including postage and handling. These shirts are red, have our logo and name on the front, and say "Love spans the spectrum" on the back. Available in Small, Medium, Large, and Extra Large sizes. Just send in form below:

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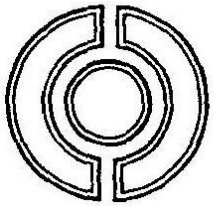

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